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ABSTRACT

Based on observations of more than 50 Japanese preschool and elementary classrooms over a 14-year period, this book offers a fresh perspective on how children become eager, motivated learners and caring responsible citizens. In a sharp departure from most previous accounts, this book suggests that Japanese education succeeds because all children--not just the brightest or best behaved--come to feel like valued members of the school community. The book notes that Japanese teachers credit John Dewey and other progressive Western educators for many of the techniques that make Japanese schools both caring and challenging. The introductory chapter notes that, like their Japanese counterparts, American teachers see friendship and belonging as central to children's growth, but that the American school system is not designed with these goals in mind. This chapter also describes observation techniques, and a reinterpretation of the roots of Japanese educational achievement, noting some of the shortcomings of Japanese education. Chapters in the book are as follows: (1) "A Brief Background on Japan's Educational System"; (2) "The Preschool Experience: Play, Community, Reflection"; (3) "The Whole Child Goes to Elementary School"; (4) "The Small Group: A Home Base for Children"; (5) "The Roots of Discipline: Community and Commitment"; (6) "Discipline: How Peers and Teachers Manage Misbehavior"; (7) "Learning and Caring"; (8) "What Is a Successful School?"; and (9) "Summary: Questions to Ask Ourselves." Characteristics of the preschools studied are appended. Contains 169 references. (HTH)

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